

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR
SUBJECT: STALIN ON SOVIET TELEVISION

REF: 76 MOSCOW 14523

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE INSTALLMENT OF THE SOVIET TELEVISION
SERIES "NASHA BIOGRAFIYA" ("OUR BIOGRAPHY") SHOWN AT 8:00
P.M. ON APRIL 20 DEALT WITH "THE YEAR 1941" AND FEATURED
NEWSREEL AND VOICE APPEARANCES OF STALIN. THOUGH
RELATIVELY BRIEF, PORTRAYAL WAS FAVORABLE. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE PROGRAM PRESENTED THE SOVIET UNION ON THE EVE OF
THE WAR, THE GERMAN INVASION, AND THE DIFFICULT PERIOD
THAT FOLLOWED, CULMINATING WITH THE SIEGE OF MOSCOW
AND THE GERMAN RETREAT FROM THE CITY DURING THE
WINTER OF 1941.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROGRAM INCLUDED:

--NEWSREEL SHOTS OF SOVIET ARMY MANEUVERS IN THE SPRING OF 1941, WITH ARMY PORTRAYED AS IN PROCESS OF BEING RE-EQUIPPED AND RECEIVING "LIMITED QUANTITIES" OF MODERN EQUIPMENT;

--SHOTS OF MAY DAY PARADE, WITH GLIMPSES OF STALIN AND OTHER LEADERS, INCLUDING BUDENNY AND TIMOSHENKO;

--FAIRLY LENGTHY CLIP OF STALIN, FOLLOWED BY SOUND-TRACT OF CELEBRATED SPEECH STALIN DELIVERED ANNOUNCING GERMAN INVASION TO THE SOVIET PEOPLE AND BEGINNING WITH THE GREETING "BROTHERS AND SISTERS". THE EFFECT OF SCRATCHY BUT CLEARLY AUDIBLE VOICE OF STALIN COMING OVER SOVIET TELEVISION IN 1977, COUPLED WITH NEWSREEL SHOTS OF SOVIET CROWDS LISTENING INTENTLY, WAS STRIKING, TO SAY THE LEAST;

--CONVENTIONAL PORTRAYAL OF MOSCOW UNDER SIEGE WITH SHOTS OF COMBAT AND HOME FRONT. COMMENTARY, HOWEVER, EMPHASIZED VITAL ROLE PLAYED BY TULA IN DEFENSE OF MOSCOW, THUS RECOGNIZING RECENT DESIGNATION OF TULA AS "HERO CITY".

4. PROGRAM ALSO FEATURED COMMENTARY BY A MILITARY HISTORIAN AND REMINISCENCES BY VARIOUS PERSONALITIES WHO PLAYED A ROLE IN DEFENSE OF MOSCOW. ONE IN PARTICULAR, A COMMANDER IN CHARGE OF MOSCOW'S CIVIL DEFENSE, RECALLED THAT IN A PERSONAL REPORT TO STALIN, HE RECOMMENDED CANCELLATION OF THE CUSTOMARY PARADE ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RED SQUARE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION BECAUSE OF THE CRITICAL MILITARY SITUATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AIR RAIDS. HE QUOTED STALIN AS RESPONDING THAT "YOU YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HAVING THE PARADE," AND ORDERING THAT THE PARADE "WILL BE HELD EVEN IN THE EVENT OF AN AIR RAID." THE PARADE WAS HELD, APPARENTLY UNEVENTFULLY.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE APPEARANCE OF STALIN ON SOVIET TELEVISION WAS IN CONTEXT OF HISTORY, HE WAS PORTRAYED AS A COURAGEOUS MILITARY AND POLITICAL LEADER. THE ADDITIONAL FEATURE OF HAVING A CONTEMPORARY REMEMBER STALIN FAVORABLY, DESCRIBING HIS ENCOUNTER WITH STALIN WARMLY AND WITH HUMOR, AND IN GENERAL PORTRAYING HIM AS AN IMPRESSIVE FIGURE, PROVIDED A STRIKING AND POINTED EMPHASIS. THE PROGRAM'S APPARENT MESSAGE: THIS IS HOW STALIN'S ROLE AS OF 1941 SHOULD BE REMEMBERED. THIS DEPICTION OF STALIN IN 1941 IS GENERALLY

IN LINE WITH THAT FOUND IN THE 1976 EDITION OF THE
GREAT SOVIET ENCYCLOPEDIA (REFTEL). BUT THE FAVORABLE
PORTRAIT OF STALIN IN THE PRESENT INSTANCE REFLECTS
ONLY A VERY SMALL ASPECT OF HIS CAREER AND THEREFORE
IS INSUFFICIENT FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE OFFICIAL
ASSESSMENT OF STALIN HAS UNDERGONE ANY FURTHER EVOLU-
TION.
TOON

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